Compiled by Kevin Savetz

"Ring-ring" is so obsolete. Magix ringtone maker can turn your favorite songs into ringtones.

Phone Phun

If you refuse to pay a buck or two to download ringtones to your mobile phone, you might not want to buy this $20 product; however, the software puts a "magix" twist on ringtones: Create your very own. Magix ringtone maker (www.magix.com) lets cell phone addicts create their own ringtones from CDs and MP3s or from their own voice. Music loops and effects processing let you create your own rings, too. Now talkative people will have a litany of new rings to annoy us. ▲

Sounds Good To Us

While we're on the subject of making things work better, the ability to listen to hours of MP3s while you work is wonderful. But what isn't so wonderful is the effect tiny computer speakers can have on your music. Because your boss won't let you replace the little speakers in your cubicle with a 5.1-channel surround-sound setup, your next best option may be Octiv Volume Logic digital remastering software.

Volume Logic ($19.95; www.octiv.com), formerly available only for iTunes, is now available for Windows Media Player, RealPlayer, Musicmatch Jukebox, and Winamp. As your music software plays your tunes, the program remasters audio in real time, boosting low-level sounds, equalizing, and performing "spectral balancing" without modifying your files. The result is better sound from little speakers. There's no guarantee that your boss will appreciate the difference, however. ▲

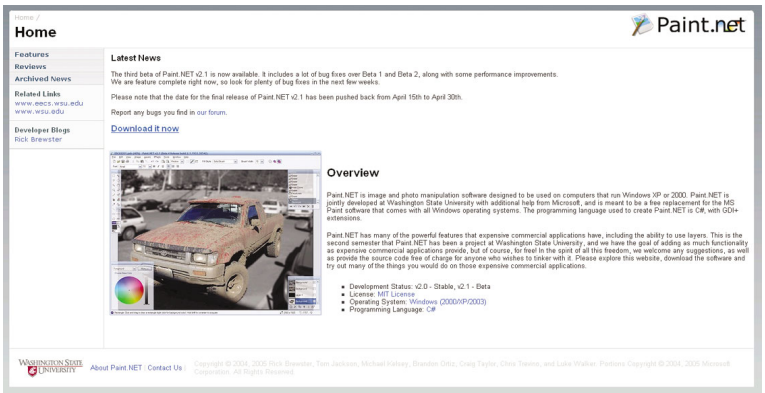
Edit home videos and then export them to surround-sound 16:9 DVDs with Movie Edit Pro 10.

Practice Makes Perfect

Before you start your own TV channel, maybe you should practice by editing your home movies and vacation videos into tolerable, perhaps even enjoyable, segments. Magix Movie Edit Pro 10 ($59.99; www.magix.com) lets you capture video, edit it, and burn your creations to DVD. Its editing features might not turn you into the next Spielberg, but the antishake filter and automatic image correction could at least make you look competent with a video camera. Best of all, the movies you create with it will be compatible with the high-tech electronics in your living room. The software imports high-definition video from HDV, HDTV, DVB, and WMVHD formats, handles a 16:9 aspect ratio, and supports surround sound. ▲

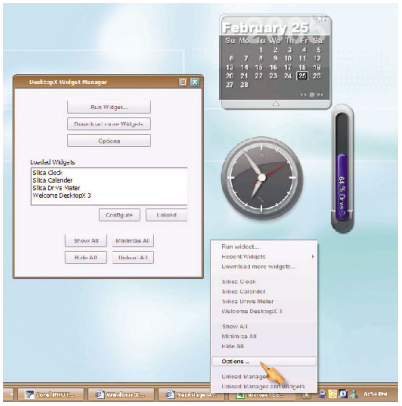
A Better Paint

The students at Washington State University know what we've all known for years: Paint, the little graphics program that's included with Windows, is pretty much worthless. So they went and did something about it. Paint.net (www.eecs.wsu.edu/paint.net) is a free photo-manipulation program for Windows 2000/XP. With features such as red-eye reduction, layer editing, the ability to import directly from a scanner, and more, the program may be perfect for digital photographers who don't want to learn complex applications such as GIMP or Photoshop. It's a trim little program (the download is only about 5MB), but you'll need to install Microsoft's .NET framework (if you don't already have it), and that baby weighs in at almost 24MB. ▲



Windows Tweaks

If you're a Windows user who's a little jealous of the Dashboard feature in Mac OS X 10.4 (Tiger), check out DesktopX 3.0 ($14.95 for end users; www.desktopx.net). The program lets you add widgets, desktop themes, and objects to your Windows Desktop, which deliver personalized information such as custom weather monitors, stock tickers, news readers, MP3 players, and calculators. The program is extendable, which lets everyone build his or her own widgets, and a complete scripting guide is also available to get you started. ▲



With Desktop X cool but informative widgets grace your Windows Desktop.

Spyware Help

FBM Software's release of ZeroSpyware 2005 ($29.95; www.fbmsoftware.com) includes a feature the company says is a spyware first: help from a human when you need it most. The software includes 24/7 spyware removal assistance. When spyware makes your PC go wonky two hours before a deadline, someone will be able to talk you though the process of removing it—or just talk you down from the ledge. The Remote Restore feature lets a technical support rep diagnose and troubleshoot the program live. But hopefully spyware won't get installed in the first place because the program's Vulnerability Scanning and Intrusion Detection features should stop the problem before it starts. ▲

ZeroSpyware includes human tech support when you need it most.

Turn Your Life Into Bizarro World

Having spent many hours idly wondering which comic book superhero power we would choose, we instantly took interest in Comic Life for Mac OS X. Comic Life ($39.95; plasq.com) won't give you superhero powers, but it will let you turn ordinary photographs into nifty digital comics. Drag your photos into the ready-made layouts, add speech bubbles and graphic effects, and you have instant hilarity. From there you can save your comics to the Web or print them out. Besides comic strips, you can use this software to make greeting cards and story books. Our plan is to make some cartoons to prove which is the better superpower, invisibility or X-ray vision. ▲

It doesn't take much artistic talent to make comics with Comic Life, but a sense of humor does help.

BIOS Upgrades Available Online

Compiled by Kevin Savetz

Before you send another motherboard to the landfill, consider upgrading the BIOS and giving your PC a new outlook on life. Here are a few recently released upgrades. Readers can check out www.cpumag.com/cpujune05/bios to see our entire upgrade list.

Motherboard	Date Available	URL
ABIT AG8 3rd Eye	04/04/2005	www.abit-usa.com/downloads/bios/bios_revision.php?categories=1&model=203
ABIT AG8	04/04/2005	www.abit-usa.com/downloads/bios/bios_revision.php?categories=1&model=200
AOpen s661FXm-S	04/01/2005	download.aopen.com.tw
ASUS K8U-X	04/07/2005	www.asus.com/support/download/item.aspx?ModelName=K8U-X&Type=BIOS
Chaintech MPM800-3	03/22/2005	www.chaintechusa.com/tw/eng/Download/dl_desc.asp?DCSNo=4&PISNo=315
Chaintech SPT800-000LD	03/29/2005	www.chaintechusa.com/tw/eng/Download/dl_desc.asp?DCSNo=4&PISNo=306